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TO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

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E. O. 11652 - GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJ: SECRETARY' S FOREIGN POLICY REPORT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. TEXT OF SECTION ON LAOS IN SECRETARY' S 1972 FOREIGN POLICY REPORT SCHEDULED FOR RELEASE APRIL 19 FOLLOWS IN FULL: " SINCE THE 1950' S THE UNITED STATES HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED THE GOAL OF AN INDEPENDENT AND NEUTRAL LAOS. THIS POLICY WAS MOST RECENTLY EXPRESSED BY ARTICLE 20 OF THE VIETNAM AGREEMENT. THIS ARTICLE COMMITS NORTH VIETNAM TO RESPECT THE 1954 AND 1962 AGREEMENTS ON LAOS AND TO REFRAIN FROM USING LAOTIAN TERRITORY TO ENCROACH ON THE SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY OF OTHER COUNTRIES. THE LAOS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT, REACHED SEPARATELY BY THE LAO PARTIES THEMSELVES ON FEBRUARY 21, 1973, PROVIDES FOR AN IMMEDIATE IN- PLACE CEASEFIRE, INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION, ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT, AND WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES WITHIN 60 DAYS THEREAFTER. ADHERENCE TO THIS AGREEMENT BY THE PARTIES CONCERNED WOULD CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE FOUNDATION OF A STABLE AND LASTING PEACE IN LAOS.

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ALTHOUGH THE UNITED STATES COMPLIED FULLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE 1962 GENEVA AGREEMENT, NORTH VIETNAM NEVER WITHDREW ITS FORCES OR ABANDONED ITS SCHEME OF SUVERTING IN LAOS AS MANY AS 100,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY PERSONNEL, ENGAGED BOTH IN OFFENSIVE COMBAT AGAINST THE LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT AND MOVING SUPPLIES SOUTH THROUGH THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. WHILE SOME ELEMENTS WERE WITHDRAWN IN 1972 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INVASION OF SOUTH VIETNAM, AN ESTIMATED 80,000 REMAINED IN LAOS AND SOUGHT TO ELIMINATE THE LAO GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY PRESENCE IN NORTHERN LAOS AND CAPTURE ADDITIONAL TERRITORY FOR THE HANOI- DOMINATED LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT (LPF).

IN THE FACE OF CONTINUING AGGRESSION FROM NORTH VIETNAM, LAOS CALLED FOR AMERICAN ASSISTANCE IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR SELF- DETERMINATION. WITH A POPULATION OF LESS THAN THREE MILLION AND ONE OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED ECONOMIES IN THE WORLD, THE COUNTRY COULD NOT BY ITSELF RESIST HANOI'S ARMIES. CONSISTENT WITH OUR OBJECTIVES OF A NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT LAOS, THE UNITED STATES RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THE REQUEST OF THE LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT. DESPITE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CHALLENGE, WE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP OUR PRESENCE TO THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT OUR UNDERTAKING WITH OUR LAOTIAN FRIENDS. FOR EXAMPLE, NO US MILITARY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED A GROUND COMBAT ROLE IN LAOS; AND IN FY 1973 ALL US SPENDING FOR LAOS WAS LIMITED BY LAW TO \$375 MILLION.

OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE KINGDOM OF LAOS HAS HELPED THIS COUNTRY PRESERVE ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN THE FACE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS. MATCHED BY THE TENACIOUS DEFENSE BY THE PEOPLE AND ARMY OF LAOS, OUR ROLE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT OF FEBRUARY 21. "

2. SPECIAL POINTS AND POLICIES TO BE HIGHLIGHTED ARE (A) US SUPPORT FOR LAO INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY (B) US ASSISTANCE REQUESTED BY RLG HAS HELPED TO PRESERVE LAO SOVEREIGNTY IN FACE NVN ATTACKS. ROGERS

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